

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing to you today as a current satellite TV subscriber who would like to add my voice of support to the pending merger of EchoStar and DIRECTV. The combination of these two satellite providers will provide numerous benefits to consumers like me, including more choices in channels, programming, broadband and new television technologies.

By merging, the combined company will be a much stronger competitor to cable television and can offer more programming choices and, most importantly, all local TV channels in every market in the U.S. By providing local TV channels everywhere, this merger will make satellite television a strong alternative to cable in our community. Throughout the country, people will now be able to turn to satellite TV to access their local news, weather and community information, in addition to a comprehensive package of national video programming.

I believe that with this merger, it will not only benefit the satellite subscriber, but it will also benefit the cable subscriber in the fact that in most areas of the country there is only one cable company which provides service to a given area which in effect creates a monopoly over that given area because the only other alternative someone has is to go to satellite but since no satellite company can offer local stations for most areas, you still have to get your locals from cable. As a result of this virtual 'monopoly' in which they have in most areas, cable companies can pretty much charge as they please. For example in my area, (Rupert, WV in Greenbrier County) to subscribe to cable for just the basic programming package with no premium channels it costs \$45.00 through Charter Communications, who is the only cable provider in this area. For that same price, I am able to get the Top 100 programming package, one group of premium channels along with my distant networks. I believe that with the addition of all local networks to satellite services, they can finally provide some much needed competition to cable companies and in return, competition generally means lower prices.

But just as exciting, the merger will bring the availability of affordable high-speed Internet service by satellite to over 40 million Americans who don't have high-speed Internet access. These tremendous benefits to consumers won't happen without the merger. Satellite-delivered Internet service will bring an affordable and competitive alternative to cable modems and DSL to consumers in big cities, small towns and rural areas alike. This will give me a competitive choice for Internet access and will be especially advantageous to rural communities where cable modems and DSL are not likely to be available anytime in the near future.

In the interest of improving our access to competitive television and Internet service, I urge you to lend your support to this merger.

Sincerely,

Stephen Baldwin
PO Box 1126

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